

Klickitat Watershed, WRIA 30

This focus sheet provides information on the availability of water for new uses in the Klickitat Watershed. This information provides a starting point for potential water users in determining the best strategies for securing water for a future project or proposal in this area.

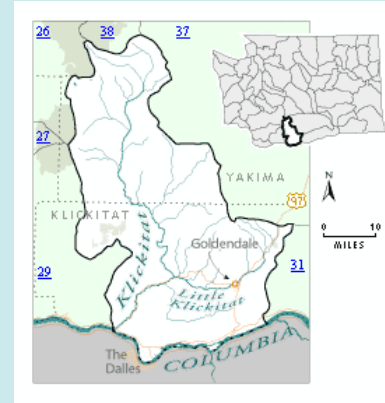
Many areas of central Washington are arid, receiving less than 20 inches of rain annually. Most of this precipitation arrives during the winter months when overall water demands are the lowest. During the summer, the snowpack is gone, there is little rain, and naturally low stream flows are dependent on groundwater inflow. At the same time, the demand for human uses, including irrigation, are at the yearly maximum. This means that groundwater and surface water are least available when water demands are the highest.

Factors affecting water availability

Tribal lands cover most of the upper and middle Klickitat subbasins. Federally Reserved Rights for the reservation are not quantified at this time and thus the legal availability of water in these areas is uncertain. Those lands in the middle to upper basin, outside the Yakama Tribe's reservation, are in small drainages that have undergone adjudications (Bird Creek, Frasier Creek, and Bacon Creek). Prior adjudication in an area is a sign that most—if not all—of the available water has already been allocated to existing uses.

Availability of water in the Lower Klickitat and Swale Creek subbasins is limited due to concerns about maintaining flows and fish habitat. Washington Department of Fish & Wildlife (WDFW) has recommended a Surface Water Source Limitation (SWSL) for Swale Creek, which can result in Ecology conditioning or denying new water right permits for the subbasin.

Within the Little Klickitat subbasin, WDFW has also recommended SWSLs for Bloodgood and Bowman creeks and adjudications have taken place in the Little Klickitat, Blockhouse Creek, and Mill Creek subbasins.



Definitions

Adjudication is a legal process conducted through a superior court to determine the extent and validity of existing water rights.

Subbasins are smaller drainage basins that together make up a WRIA, and are generally named for the principle creek or other surface water to which that runoff flows.

Surface water source limitation: A recommendation from the Department of Fish and Wildlife that flows be protected to maintain fish populations. See RCW 77.57.020

WRIA: Water Resources Inventory Area; also known as a watershed or river basin. For environmental administration and planning purposes, Washington is divided up into 62 major WRIs. WRIs were defined by Chapter 173-500 WAC in 1976.

Applications for surface water withdrawals from the mainstem Columbia River are subject to the Instream Resource Protection Program for the Columbia River, as are any proposed groundwater withdrawals determined to have a significant and direct impact on the Columbia River. (For more information, see <http://apps.leg.wa.gov/WAC/default.aspx?cite=173-563>.)

Water supply available for new uses

Surface water and groundwater availability is currently very limited throughout the basin. The Klickitat Basin Watershed Plan (www.ecy.wa.gov/programs/eap/wrias/Planning/30.html) developed by local stakeholders provides further information regarding water availability. As well as reviewing the watershed plan, Ecology encourages you to look over the Multipurpose Water Storage Screening Assessments developed by the Klickitat Watershed Planning Unit (www.klickitatcounty.org/NaturalR/Content.asp?fC=19&fD=3).

The groundwater permit exemption allows certain users of small quantities of ground water (most commonly, single residential well owners) to construct wells and develop their water supplies without obtaining a water right permit from Ecology. However, water rights developed through the permit exemption are not exempt from the water right seniority system and could be regulated during future drought periods. For more information about the groundwater permit exemption, refer to www.ecy.wa.gov/pubs/fwr92104.pdf.

The Office of Columbia River (OCR) is aggressively pursuing water supply development opportunities throughout the Columbia Basin. You can find additional information at the OCR Web site at: www.ecy.wa.gov/programs/wr/cwp/crwmp.html. Some projects are being studied in WRIA 30 that could make water available in the future. Additionally, OCR has developed supplies on the Columbia River mainstem that may satisfy surface water and adjacent groundwater applications in WRIA 30 (e.g. Lake Roosevelt Incremental Storage Release Project).

The 1980 Columbia River Rule, WAC 173-563-020, requires a consultation process for any new surface water application (or groundwater application that would have significant and direct impacts on the Columbia River). The purpose of the consultation process is to inform Ecology whether “the use of such waters will be, if deemed necessary, subjected to instream flow protection or mitigation conditions determined on a case-by-case basis through the evaluation conducted with the agencies and tribes.” The OCR projects described above are using this consultation process to develop mitigation projects that allow Ecology to issue new water right permits. New applications in the consultation process not covered by OCR mitigation would likely require independent mitigation to address fishery impacts.

Additional options for finding a water supply include:

- Connecting to an established water supplier. This is the fastest and simplest option.
- Processing a change application with the Klickitat County or Yakima County water conservancy boards.
- Processing an application through the Cost Reimbursement Program. www.ecy.wa.gov/pubs/0511016.pdf. The applicant will likely need to develop a mitigation strategy to offset any impacts their water use will have on surface waters.

For more information on these and other options, refer to “Alternatives for Water Right Application Processing” www.ecy.wa.gov/pubs/1111067.pdf.

Pending water right applications in this watershed

Washington water law is based on the “prior appropriation” system, often called “first in time, first in right.” Applications for water from the same source must be processed in the order they are received.

Ecology asks anyone who needs a water right (new, change, or transfer) to submit the pre-application consultation form and meet with us to review your water supply needs and project proposal.

- Apply for a New Water Right
<http://www.ecy.wa.gov/programs/wr/rights/newrights.html>
- Apply to Change or Transfer a Water Right or Claim
http://www.ecy.wa.gov/programs/wr/rights/change_transfer_use.html

The map in this document shows some of the factors that will be considered when evaluating water right permit applications. Here are some information sources to assist you with your research:

- Locate and research water rights on land parcels anywhere in the state (Water Resource Explorer)
<http://www.ecy.wa.gov/programs/wr/info/webmap.html>
- Pending Water Right Applications by County
<http://www.ecy.wa.gov/programs/wr/rights/tracking-apps.html>
- Subscribe to a water right application RSS feed for a county or WRIA
http://www.ecy.wa.gov/programs/wr/rights/wr_app_rss.html
- WRIA map showing the total number of water right claims, certificates, permits and applications
<http://www.ecy.wa.gov/programs/wr/rights/Images/pdf/waterright-wria-maps.pdf>
- Search and view well reports using a variety of search tools
<https://fortress.wa.gov/ecy/waterresources/map/WCLSWebMap/default.aspx>

More Information

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